

Ursuline College

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Ohio Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee
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Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Smith, and the Ohio Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee, we are very grateful for your work to advance our state and its people. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of our students, the graduates of tomorrow who will carry Ohio into its future.

You bear responsibility for almost 12 million Ohio citizens. As one of those citizens, I write today for the over half a million students who attend our colleges and universities (<https://www.univstats.com/states/ohio/student-population/>). Thousands of these students learn on the 52 AICUO-member campuses all across the state, including Ursuline.

Let me tell you a little about the 1,000 students who attend Ursuline College in Pepper Pike, in the 18th Senate district, represented by the chair, Senator Cirino. Every one of them needs your support, and in telling you about them I will at the same time be telling you what they do for the State of Ohio. Our students *come from Ohio and they stay in Ohio*. 88% of our students are from within the state, and of our 14,000 living alumnae, 85% of them reside in Ohio.

Our 1,000 students represent the richness and diversity of Ohio. In a state where fewer than one-third of adults have a college degree, 40% of our students are the first in their families to attend college (<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/OH/AGE135221>). Over half of our entering first-year classes are students of color, many of them from Cleveland and its inner-ring suburbs.

In representing the richness of our state, our students also represent the need for education in Ohio. Two points drive this home:

1. Over half of our entering undergrads are eligible for federal Pell grants, the neediest students nationwide. These grants are available to students whose Expected Family Contribution (EFC) is less than \$6,207.
2. Of these students, only one-third are now eligible for OCOG. OCOG grants are currently available to students whose Expected Family Contribution (EFC) is less than \$2,190, much lower than the eligibility threshold for Pell grants. The increased access included in Governor DeWine's proposed budget will do a great deal to close this gap. For Ursuline, with an entering class of just over 100, it will increase the number of OCOG-eligible students by 65%.

In addition, the OCOG increase will make it much easier for students to attend. For those in the sciences, Choose Ohio First grants are also a key part of the support they need.

You are already familiar with statistics showing that college graduates earn significantly higher incomes compared to high school graduates, and you know the importance of earning power—and the increased tax revenue it brings—for Ohio. Just over two years ago, *Forbes* magazine reported a study by the American Enterprise Institute that named Ursuline College #1 in the nation for students' upward mobility. When our legislature provides better access to higher education at schools like Ursuline, Ohio's students are the beneficiaries.

In Northeast Ohio, the Say Yes program guarantees free college tuition to qualifying Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) graduates who attend any public university in the state. As an independent college, Ursuline adds to that by giving five equivalent scholarships a year to CMSD students—without any public support. In fact, *every* entering first-year student receives some form of financial aid funded directly by Ursuline. Our 1000 students, undergraduate and graduate together, receive a total of \$24 million in financial aid annually; that is how they are able to afford their education.

The work that we do in Pepper Pike is transformative for our students, and it is also transformative for our state. Our graduates enter some of the most needed professions in Ohio.

- We graduate over 120 new nurses every year, with a 100% job placement rate following licensure.
- Beyond that, we graduate 90 advanced practice nurses each year, and by 2024 we will add close to 30 physician assistants annually.
- All told, over the past decade we have launched more than 1200 BSN students, plus another 700 nurses who have earned graduate degrees with us, helping to meet the state's growing need for advanced practice clinicians.

Ursuline graduates work in every healthcare institution in Northeast Ohio. The National League for Nursing (NLN) has named our program a Center of Excellence in Nursing Education for learning and professional development (2021-25), one of only 10 in the country, and our dean, Patricia Sharpnack, DNP, RN, CNE, NEA-BC, ANEF, FAAN, is a past president of the Ohio Board of Nursing and now chair-elect of the NLN. Ursuline's leadership in healthcare education benefits hospitals and care facilities all across the state—and, on an individual level, benefits every one of us who become their patients.

Ursuline also responds to the need for educators in Ohio, and we are grateful to the state for its \$150,000 grant this year to address the teacher shortage.

1. Each year our Master Apprentice program graduates approximately 20 new teachers.
2. Our graduate Educational Administration programs, where 98% of the students are from Ohio, add the same number of graduates prepared for principal and superintendent licenses.

In other words, in two vitally important workforce areas—healthcare and education—this Ohio college fills needs across the region and the state. Not to forget the social workers, biologists, pre-law students, and thinkers in language, communications, and history that we graduate every year too. These students are prepared through academic and career advising, internships, mentorships, and role models among our alumnae and alumni in ways that make Ursuline an economic driver in Northeast Ohio, and specifically in Cuyahoga and Lake Counties.

You probably know that Ursuline College, like its students, operates on a tight budget. We are able to achieve the results we do not only because of our own efforts but also because of creative partnerships that weave us into the state's financial and institutional landscape. I'd like to highlight three of them.

1. Since 2021, we have partnered with the Cleveland Clinic and the Howley Foundation to educate two dozen nursing students per cohort in a program called ASPIRE. By next year, when four cohorts are enrolled, we expect to have close to 80 ASPIRE students on campus. Most are from the City of Cleveland, and with the help of Ohio's OCOG grants included, all of them receive full last-dollar scholarships.
2. One of the highest-need areas in nursing is that of nurse anesthetists, a need accentuated by the COVID epidemic. We are working with a national provider of anesthesiology services to introduce this specialty in combination with our Doctor of Nursing Practice degree. Currently, we are in the process of approval for this program from the needed accrediting bodies and the Ohio Department of Higher Education.
3. The federal government has recognized the work we do for community healthcare education with two grants to supplement our nursing resources:
 - a. A \$2.2 million Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) for increasing nursing professionals to address health inequities in Greater Cleveland.
 - b. A \$735,000 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) grant for substance abuse treatment education, to address the opioid crisis in the region.

Resourceful public-private partnerships like these extend the reach of a college like Ursuline and, because they are laser-focused on the needs of the community, advance the good of Ohio as well.

The success of Ursuline students—in nursing, education, and across the curriculum—is crucial to the economy of our state. With your help, AICUO institutions like ours make a college degree accessible to students who might not otherwise be able to afford it. And, by providing the kind of nurturing environment that embeds them in their community, we can ensure that our students graduate, and they stay in Ohio.

Last year Ursuline celebrated 150 years of a mission to transform students for service, leadership, and professional excellence. Since our founding in 1871, we have persevered through recessions, international conflicts, and not one but two pandemics, with a strength that is emblematic of the fiber of Ohio. We inspire our students to persevere and thrive too, and we could not do so without your support of the independent higher education sector.

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